TEACHERS AND PUPILS.

Admission for the Industry and zeal, with which the Education Commission is prosecuting its labours may soon be furthered with dismay regarding the increasing size and character of its tasks and the time for their performance. The Commission is deeply conscious of the seriousness of its duties, and its investigation of every question affecting national education in all its branches is apparently so extensive and minute as to excite the fear that the enquiry will be practically inextricable, or that, when the Commission has completed its present programme, strong reasons will have arisen owing to the change of conditions and the development of new educational ideas—for conducting a fresh examination into the subject.

The Commission was appointed on January 29, 1911, to enquire into and report upon higher education in the United States of America. In September last the scope of its work was extended to "all branches of education"—a field which might occupy a lifetime to roam over. This step warranted the postponement of a new and comprehensive Education Bill, which maintained several views which the then responsible Minister and expert officials of the department deemed urgently necessary to ensure that South Australian children shall not educationally lag behind those of other States. So far as the government has not dealt with the more crucial and important matters affecting either higher, secondary, or primary instruction, its chief recommendations involve larger demands on the Treasury.

The third progress report, which was presented to Parliament on Thursday, affords no promise that the Legislature will this session be in a position to pass an Education Bill. For at least another year, therefore, the compulsory system will remain defective relatively to private schools, children generally will not be required to attend so regularly as is desirable, and they will be free to leave school a year later than is necessary in many cases, which the highest authorities regard as the minimum for release from school attendance. Since submitting its second progress report the commission held 57 meetings and examined 22 witnesses. Visits were made to South Wales and Queensland, and evidence was taken from representatives of all branches of primary education in those States. A vast mass of information was collected, and the qualifications of the Commissioners for the education questions were probably much enhanced; but the recommendations embodied in the report are few in number, and advice tendered by local educationalists who have studied their business. No words will endorse the self-evident proposition that "the success of any education system depends upon large measures in obtaining the existing difficulty in obtaining suitable teachers will be ameliorated in future unless the profession should be made more attractive, for one may assume that, as the Commonwealth advances in population and wealth, commerce and industries will offer an increasing number of "pions" to ambitious young women. It is unfortunate if, as in some States in America, primary school teaching were left mostly to the fair sex. South Australian schools must command the services of competent men of high character, who will permanently improve the destinies of the usually high-spirited boys. By increasing the salaries of teachers of both sexes who are now receiving less than £500 a year the Government might fairly expect to attract a more qualified and contented staff. It is particularly desirable that young men should be enabled to marry and establish homes. Ability to do this comparatively early in life would be a decided compensation for the deprivation of speculative chances later in life in the commercial sphere. In view of the commission's remarks on the recommendation to re-arrange the classification of schools and reduce the number of classes, the Minister should be advised that head masters might attain a salary of £500 a year. That amount is paid in Victoria and New South Wales, and in Western Australia the highest salary is £100. In raising the status of the few men in the forefront the Government would uplift the whole service and attract to it aspiring youth who now pass it by.

The abolition of the title "provisional" and the advancement of status will be an act of fairness to many persons in the "back blocks" who deserve special sympathy and consideration on account of their isolation.

If for nothing else. Popular opinion—especially that of the parents of more or less hovels or "furried" children—approves of the proposal that inspectors should be relieved of the duty of examining for promotion, and that this work should be performed by the teachers of all schools simultaneously. The reasons for the proposed appointment of a lady inspector are not so plain. Surely the present inspectors—if relieved of "examining" duties—might be trusted to devote additional attention, if necessary, to investigating the condition of the lady teachers work and live, and to report upon girls' domestic studies. If not, how is one lady inspector to accomplish the whole of this work satisfactorily? Regarding the medical inspection of pupils and children, both in New South Wales and Queensland, evidence was taken from various quarters, and the results from the work will be of the greatest advantage. The compulsory military training law strengthens the case outlined; and, in the circumstances of the demand for a special recruit officer and two trained nurses, as the beginning of a system of medical inspection, ought not to be unduly delayed. The system to be adopted, however, should be decided in consultation with parents of the natural obligation to care for their children's health.